

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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INRE-00 /123 W

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O R 041306Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5678

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

CINCPAC

UNCLAS VIENTIANE 6120

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: LPF HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 4

BEGIN SUMMARY: LPF SPECIAL ADVISOR PHOUMI HELD PRESS CONFERENCE LATE AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 4 IN WHICH HE CRITICIZED RLG "RIGHTISTS" FOR OBSTRUCTING THE SIGNING OF PROTOCOL, WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN AGREED TO BY TWO SIDES. PHOUMI ASSERTED THAT LPF HAD NEGOTIATED IN GOOD FAITH AND HAD MADE ALL CONCESSIONS EARLIER REQUESTED BY PRIME MINISTER AND SUGGESTED BY THE AMERICAN CHARGE. HE CALLED AGAIN FOR AN EARLY SIGNING OF PROTOCOL. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS, PHOUMI DECLARED THAT USG COULD PRESSURE "RIGHTISTS" TO ACCEDE TO SOUVANNA'S WISHES THAT PROTOCOL BE SIGNED. END SUMMARY.

1. LPF DELEGATION VIENTIANE, HEADED BY SPECIAL ADVISOR PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, HELD PRESS CONFERENCE, ATTENDED BY SOME 30 JOURNALISTS, AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 4. PHOUMI FIRST READ LENGTHY PREPARED DECLARATION CONCERNING "REFUSAL OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE VIENTIANE GOVERNMENT TO SIGN THE PROTOCOL," THE MAIN

POINTS OF WHICH FOLLOW:

(A) THE LPF CONSISTENTLY HAD SHOWN GOOD FAITH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND HAS MADE MANY CONCESSIONS TO THE RLG. RLG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PRESENT STALE-MATE AND HAS RENEGED ON TEXT TO WHICH BOTH SIDES PREVIOUSLY AGREED. LPF CONCESSIONS RESPONDED FULLY TO ALL DEMANDS MADE BY PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA AND THE SUGGESTIONS OF AMERICAN CHARGE DEAN, BOTH OF WHOM HAD AFFIRMED THAT IF ALL DEMANDS WERE MET THE PROTOCOL COULD BE SIGNED IMMEDIATELY.

(B) STATEMENT SPELLED OUT "CONCESSIONS" WHICH LPF FELT IT HAD MADE TO RLG, INCLUDING DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS, STATIONING OF TROOPS IN TWO CAPITALS AND OTHER MILITARY QUESTIONS. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO PHOUMI, RLG PERMITTED "EXTREMISTS OF THE RIGHT" TO SABOTAGE SIGNATURE OF PROTOCOL BY RAISING NEW AND UNREASONABLE DEMANDS CONCERNING MATTERS WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN RESOLVED.

(C) AFTER AUGUST 20 COUP, STAGED BY RIGHTISTS, PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA AND CHARGE DEAN APPEALED AGAIN TO THE LPF FOR NEW CONCESSIONS. THE NEW TEXT OF THE PROTOCOLS WAS READY FOR SIGNING ON AUGUST 24, BUT, ON AUGUST 27, PRIME MINISTER TOLD REUTERS THAT "THE PROTOCOLS CANNOT BE SIGNED IN THEIR PRESENT FORM." THIS CONSTITUTED A COMPLETE ABOUT-FACE ON THE PART OF SOUVANNA AND CHARGE DEAN.

(D) RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS, STATEMENT ALLEGED, RESTS ON "AMERICAN WARMONGERS" AND ON "PRO-AMERICAN REACTIONARIES IN LAOS" AND SOUVANNA CANNOT ESCAPE HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITY. LPF REJECTS CATEGORICALLY ANY NEW MODIFICATION IN THE TEXT OF THE PROTOCOL; DEMANDS IMMEDIATE SIGNING OF THE PROTOCOL IN ITS PRESENT FORM; AND APPEALS TO ALL PEACE-LOVING FORCES IN LAOS AND ABROAD TO SUPPORT LPF POSITION.

2. AFTER READING HIS DECLARATION, PHOUMI ENTERTAINED QUESTIONS.  
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A LAO JOURNALIST ASKED WHETHER LPF DELEGATION WOULD RETURN TO SAM NEUA IF PROTOCOLS COULD NOT BE SIGNED. PHOUMI RESPONDED THAT BOTH PARTIES HAVE AGREED ON PROTOCOLS; THAT THE LPF, THEREFORE, CAN MAKE NO FURTHER CONCESSIONS; AND THAT, GIVEN CONTINUED IMPASSE, RETURN OF LPF DELEGATION TO SAM NEUA WOULD DEPEND ON SOUPHANOUVONG'S ORDER.

3. RESPONDING TO FOLLOW-UP QUESTION, WHETHER LPF WOULD

FORM GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE IF DELEGATION RETURNED TO SAM NEUA, PHOUMI OBSERVED THAT IF LPF HAD WANTED TO FORM A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, IT WOULD HAVE DONE SO LONG AGO. PHOUMI DECLARED THAT LPF HAD OPTED NOT RPT NOT TO FORM A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE BECAUSE "IT WANTS TO SOLVE THE LAO CONFLICT BY PEACEFUL MEANS."

4. IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION IF SOUVANNA PHOUMA RESIGNS BECAUSE OF ILL HEALTH OR DIES, WOULD LPF NEGOTIATE WITH A SUCCESSOR, PHOUMI SAID THAT "DEPENDS ON THE IDENTITY OF THE SUCCESSOR, WHAT HE WANTS TO DO, AND WHETHER HE WANTS PEACE OR A RENEWAL OF FIGHTING." PHOUMI STATED THAT HE PERSONALLY HOPES SOUVANNA PHOUMA DOES NOT RESIGN OR DIE BECAUSE (1) THE LPF HAD COOPERATED WITH SOUVANNA BEFORE; (2) SOUVANNA IS, OF COURSE, SOUPHANOUVONG'S HALF BROTHER; AND (3) SOUVANNA HAS THUS FAR IN THE NEGOTIATIONS BEEN COOPERATIVE AND, AS A RESULT, THE PARTIES HAVE ALREADY SIGNED THE FEBRUARY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT.

5. ANOTHER JOURNALIST NOTED THAT THE JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL (JNPC), PROVIDED FOR IN THE VIENTIANE AGREEMENT, SEEMED TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND ASKED FOR PHOUMI'S COMMENTS ON HOW THIS CAN BE CONSISTENT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S WISH TO RESPECT THE LAO CONSTITUTION. IN RESPONSE, PHOUMI SAID THAT THE 1962 AGREEMENTS PROVIDED THAT THE COALITION GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE TWO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE FORMED "UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES." BOTH PROVISOS, PHOUMI NOTED, WERE INCONSISTENT WITH THE EXISTING CONSTITUTION BUT THEY WERE ACCEPTED FOR THE SAKE OF NATIONAL CONCORD. HE ADDED THAT HE DOUBTED THE KING WOULD DISAPPROVE OF THE JNPC BECAUSE THE KING, IN FEBRUARY, SENT A TELEGRAM TO SOUVANNA CONGRATULATING HIM ON CONCLUDING THE VIENTIANE

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AGREEMENT WHICH PROVIDED FOR THE FORMATION OF THE JNPC. PHOUMI, THEREFORE, PRESUMED THAT THE KING CONSIDERS THE COUNCIL ACCEPTABLE AND THAT THE PROTOCOLS SHOULD BE SATISFACTORY.

6. AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST CONCLUDED THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD BY ASKING WHETHER PHOUMI THOUGHT THE U.S. EMBASSY COULD EXERT PRESSURE ON THE RIGHTIST TO COMPLY WITH SOUVANNA'S WISHES THAT THE PROTOCOL BE SIGNED. PHOUMI ANSWERED: "THE AMERICANS COULD COUNSEL OR EVEN OBLIGE THE RIGHT NOT TO STAND IN THE WAY OF PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA. YOU KNOW JUST AS WELL AS I DO HOW THE RIGHTIST REACTIONARIES OPERATE. WITHOUT U.S. HELP, THEY COULD DO NOTHING IN LAOS. THAT IS WHY THE AMERICANS ARE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT HAPPENS IN LAOS." PHOUMI CONCLUDED THAT "KEY" TO RESOLVING

PRESENT IMPASSE IS "AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY."

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Review Authority:** collinp0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 28 SEP 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <28-Sep-2001 by maustmc>; APPROVED <04-Feb-2002 by collinp0>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
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**TAGS:** PGOV, PINT, PFOR, LA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005